

Provident Charter School
Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy
(Approved Sept 2026)

Purpose

Provident Charter School is committed to providing a safe, positive learning environment for students, and recognizes that bullying and intimidation have a negative effect on school climate. Because our students process language, reading, and communication differently, our school environment must be a sanctuary of absolute emotional and physical safety.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that every student can learn in an environment free from intimidation, harassment, or humiliation. Bullying disrupts a student's ability to learn, isolates individuals, and undermines our core mission: building confident, resilient readers and communicators. We are committed to prompt, equitable, and restorative responses to any behavior that compromises this safety.

Definitions of Bullying

Bullying is any severe or pervasive physical, written, or verbal act—or an electronic communication (cyberbullying)—directed toward a student or students that can reasonably be predicted to:

- Place a reasonable student in fear of harm to their person or property.
- Cause a substantially detrimental effect on a student's physical or mental health.
- Substantially interfere with a student's academic performance.
- Substantially interfere with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from school services, activities, or privileges by spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, or environment, engaging in social exclusion, extortion, intimidation or ridicule
- Be severe, persistent or pervasive
- Substantially disrupt the orderly operation of the school
- Physically harm a student

Bullying is characterized by an imbalance of power (social, emotional, physical, or verbal) and is *typically* repeated over time. It is distinct from ordinary peer conflict, social misunderstandings, or the impulsive social interactions that can sometimes occur as students learn to navigate executive functioning challenges. Bullying can be a single incident of intentional severity that creates a similar imbalance of power as described above.

Examples of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms. Because our students have language-based learning differences, bullying in our community often manifests in specific ways that staff and students must recognize:

- **Verbal & Written:** Name-calling, teasing, or mocking a student's reading aloud, speech patterns, or tracking difficulties. Writing cruel notes or using technology/speech-to-text tools to generate harmful messages.
- **Social & Emotional:** Intentionally excluding a peer from a group, spreading rumors, or mimicking a student's processing delays or difficulties following multi-step directions during play or group work.
- **Physical:** Shoving, hitting, tripping, damaging personal property, or intimidating gestures.
- **Cyberbullying:** Posting text, images, or videos online or via messaging apps intended to hurt, embarrass, or isolate a classmate. This can also include harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student, teacher or employee of the school. All forms of cyberbullying are unacceptable and, to the extent that such actions are disruptive to the educational process of the school.

(New) Bullying and Harassment Involving Synthetic Media (AI)

Definition of AI-Generated or Modified Cyberbullying/Harassment:

Bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment under this policy shall encompass the non-consensual creation, possession, upload, transfer, or dissemination of artificially generated, modified, or synthetic media. This includes "deepfakes," computer-generated synthetic images, voice clones, or manipulated video and audio designed to mimic, impersonate, mock, or target a student, a group of students, or a district employee. Prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- **Synthetic Sexual Exploitation & Harassment:** Utilizing generative AI platforms to place an individual's real face, body, or voice into sexually suggestive, nude, or demeaning contexts (classified as sexual harassment).
- **Forged Digital Likeness:** The intentional creation of synthetic images, video, or audio designed to defraud, defame, injure the reputation, or severely compromise the emotional well-being of any member of the school community.
- **Targeted Manipulation:** Generating or sharing AI-modified text, dialogue, or digital avatars to mock a student's protected classes (e.g., race, gender, disability, or sexual orientation) or to orchestrate targeted social exclusion.

Off-Campus Jurisdiction:

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Public School Code (24 P.S. § 13-1303.1-A) and constitutional standards governing student speech, the school reserves the right to discipline students for the creation or distribution of AI-generated content that occurs off-campus or outside of school hours. *This authority applies if the synthetic media creates, or is reasonably forecast to create, a substantial disruption to the school environment, or if it infringes upon the rights of other students or staff to feel secure and access a safe learning environment.*

School Discipline/Interventions:

- School administrators will use the school's Incident and Action Codes as a standard guide to assess consequences and/or interventions.
- Examples of potential actions could include: In-Person Parent Conferences, Digital Citizenship Courses, Detention, Loss of Technology Privileges, Suspensions and Expulsion and Referral to Law Enforcement (see next section below).
- School officials reserve the right to make final decisions regarding discipline, on a case by case basis, related to the severity of the incident, the significance of disruption to the daily function of the school and the repetitive aspect of similar behavior.

Mandated Reporting and Law Enforcement Notification:

Consistent with **Pennsylvania Act 125 of 2024, Act 35 of 2025**, and state mandated reporter laws, school personnel who become aware of AI-generated sexual depictions of minors (including synthetic Child Sexual Abuse Material or CSAM) must treat the incident with immediate priority. *Such material must be reported immediately to local law enforcement and child protective services. School officials shall take immediate steps to restrict the local digital dissemination of the material, preserve evidence, and provide robust counseling and mental health support to the targeted victim(s).*

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How to Notify Administration About Bullying or Harassment

Anyone who witnesses or suspects bullying should report it immediately to the principal or vice principals.

- **Verbal Reports:** Students can speak directly to any trusted adult—their classroom teacher, speech-language pathologist (SLP), counselor, or the Principals. The staff member will document the conversation. The staff accepting the complaint shall handle the report objectively, naturally, and professionally, setting aside personal biases that might or disfavor the student filing the complaint or those accused of a violation of this policy.
- **Bullying/Harassment Reporting Form:** Students, parents, or staff can submit a report through the school website at [2026-2027 Bullying/Harassment Reporting Form](#).
- **Anonymous Box:** A physical drop box is located outside the main office. Students can drop a drawing, a written note, or a printed form to alert the administration.
- **Safe to Say Something:** [Safe To Say Something](#) - anonymous reporting app where reports are shared with school administrators regarding alleged bullying and/or harassment. This app is shared with all staff, students and parents.

Procedures for a Report of Bullying, Harassment, or Peer Conflict

Once a verbal or written report is received by any staff member, the administration will utilize a tiered protocol to ensure the response is equitable, predictable, and proportional to the behavior.

All reports will first undergo an **Initial Intake and Tier Assessment** to determine if the behavior constitutes a Level 1 Minor Peer Conflict, or a Level 2/3 Bullying or Harassment infraction.

Level 1 – Minor / First-Time Peer Conflict

If the intake assessment determines the incident involves isolated teasing, minor boundary violations, mild social exclusion, or accidental/impulsive digital misuse, the issue will be managed at the classroom and instructional staff level.

- **Immediate Staff Intervention:** The classroom teacher or witnessing staff member will provide immediate verbal redirection and conduct a private discussion warning the student of expectations.
- **Restorative Action:** Staff will guide the student through a guided apology or a structured reflection activity.
- **Local Consequences:** Staff may implement a potential loss of immediate minor privileges, such as a partial recess removal.
- **Parent Notification (Classroom Level):** The classroom teacher will contact the parents of the involved students by the end of the school day to align behavioral strategies.
- **Support Measures:** The teacher or counselor will conduct an informal check-in within 24–48 hours, and apply environmental adjustments (such as discretionary seating changes) or increase monitoring during unstructured times.
- **Note:** If Level 1 behaviors are persistent and repeated despite these interventions, the teacher will formally escalate the matter to the Administration as a Level 2 infraction.

Level 2 & Level 3 – Repeated, Moderate, or Severe Bullying & Harassment

If the incident involves persistent name-calling, physical aggression, coordinated social exclusion, intentional cyberbullying, or discriminatory harassment, it will immediately trigger the formal administrative protocol managed by the Principals or Vice Principals.

1. Immediate Safety Check

The Principals or designated administrator will immediately assess whether interim safety measures are needed to protect the reporting student. This may include immediate schedule modifications, changing seating arrangements, pairing the student with a staff escort, or adjusting recess and locker locations to prevent contact.

2. Administrative Investigation & Information Gathering

The Principals will formally document the complaint and interview the students involved and any witnesses separately. Because our students have language-based learning differences, all administrative interviews will be conducted with patience, visual aids if necessary, and ample processing time to ensure accurate and unhurried communication.

3. Administrative Parental Notification

By the end of the school day on which the formal investigation is launched, the administration will contact the parents/guardians of both the complainant (target) and the respondent (accused student) to inform them that an official investigation is underway.

4. Determination & Action Plan (Within 5 School Days)

The Principals will make an official determination based on the gathered evidence within five school days. If bullying or harassment is confirmed, a documented, multi-layered plan will be enacted immediately:

- **For the Complainant (Alleged Target):** The administration will implement a formal, documented Student Safety Plan signed by administration and parents. This plan will include a designated "Safe Adult," scheduled counseling check-ins, structured transitions, academic flexibility (such as extended deadlines), and regular weekly administrative wellness checks with the student and family.
- **For the Respondent (Alleged Aggressor):** Disciplinary actions will align strictly with the Progressive Discipline and Comprehensive Support Matrix (see below), ranging from temporary loss of unstructured privileges to a 1–5 day suspension, or law enforcement referral for civil rights violations. Disciplinary consequences will be paired heavily with mandatory skill-building sessions with a counselor, a mandatory parent conference to establish a formal Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), and a mandatory re-entry meeting before returning to class.

Consequences and Disciplinary Action: *Severity Level/Examples of Behavior Potential
Consequences & Interventions*

[Progressive Discipline and Support Matrix](#) (document only - not shared publicly).

Confidentiality

We understand that reporting bullying, discrimination, or harassment can feel incredibly vulnerable for our students. To protect everyone involved:

- **Discretion by Default:** Reports will be handled with the highest possible degree of privacy. Information will only be shared with the specific staff members directly involved in keeping the students safe and investigating the claim.
- **Need-to-Know Sharing:** Parents of the involved students will be kept fully informed of the steps being taken, but specific disciplinary actions taken against *other* students cannot be disclosed due to federal privacy laws ([FERPA - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#)).
- **Retaliation Protection:** Retaliation against any student who reports an incident, or who cooperates in an investigation, is strictly prohibited and will result in immediate, severe disciplinary action.

Discrimination & Harassment

Our school explicitly prohibits discrimination and harassment. While bullying can happen for any reason, discrimination and harassment are specific forms of mistreatment targeted at a student's actual or perceived identity.

We protect all students, regarding:

- Race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin.
- Sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- Religion or creed.
- **Disability Status:** This includes a student's learning profile, speech/language impairments, executive functioning differences, or need for specialized accommodations.

Harassment: Under Pennsylvania educational and criminal frameworks, harassment is defined as any unwelcome verbal, written, physical, or electronic conduct directed at a student that either targets a protected characteristic or is intentionally designed to alarm, annoy, or torment them. To violate school policy, the behavior must be *severe or pervasive* enough to disrupt the student's education, interfere with their well-being, or create an intimidating, hostile learning environment.

Key Factors of School-Based Harassment:

- **Protected Identity:** The conduct targets a student's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.
- **Intent to Harm or Alarm:** The behavior includes physical contact (or threats of it), following a student, or repeatedly committing acts intended to torment them without a legitimate purpose.
- **Severe and Pervasive Impact:** The actions are frequent or intense enough to fundamentally impair a student's ability to learn, participate in school activities, or feel safe.
- **Digital & Cyber Extension:** The harassment occurs via text, apps, or social media, specifically including seriously disparaging online statements about a minor's physical appearance, mental health, or sexuality.

Procedures for Discrimination & Harassment Reports

When a report involves allegations of discrimination or harassment, our standard bullying procedures are elevated to ensure legal compliance and civil rights protections:

1. **Immediate Intake:** The Principal (acting as the school's Civil Rights Coordinator) or the principal's designee will formally document the complaint.
2. **External Reporting Support:** If the harassment involves severe systemic issues or physical safety risks, the administration will coordinate with district or state compliance officers as required by law.

3. **Targeted Remedies:** Beyond individual discipline, if a pattern of discrimination or harassment is found within a specific grade or classroom, the school will implement mandatory systemic remedies. This includes targeted, accessible, language-appropriate sensitivity training and community circles to address the root cultural issue.

Reporting Incidents and School Responsibilities

Provident Charter School strongly encourages students, parents or guardians, school employees, and bus drivers who become aware of any act of bullying to immediately report that conduct to the school principals. Upon receiving a report, the school principals or their designee are authorized and directed to investigate the incident promptly.

To maintain a safe learning environment, nothing in this policy shall prevent school staff from fulfilling their professional responsibilities, enforcing discipline, or issuing consequences under other school policies and disciplinary rules. Furthermore, this policy does not prevent students or parents and guardians from filing a separate complaint under the school's anti-harassment policy.

To proactively address these behaviors, Provident Charter School may develop and implement comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention programs. These programs will provide school staff and students with the appropriate training to effectively respond to, intervene in, and report incidents of bullying.